# Day One by BlueClue182

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**Summary:**

The morning after the Shadow Gate is closed. Mike and Eleven snuggle up in a room full of exhausted teenagers. These kids deserve a break.

Prompt: "Your hair gets so soft after you wash it."

# Day One

**Author's Note:**

> Day One is both the title, and the official beginning of my February Fluff challenge, where I post a new fluffy piece each day this month. This one is a couple days late because international travel is a butt.
> I'm trying to apply the prompts in different/ unexpected ways? So hopefully this fits the bill.
>
> Thank you to my Beta Goku/Sarah :D

Mike tip-toed his way down the basement steps. After everything that happened in the last few days, El had put her foot down and told Hopper she was going wherever the rest of the boys were. Hopper relented easily—the kid deserved whatever she wanted as long as she stayed outta sight, as far as he was concerned. And that's how she got to the blanket fort, curled up fast asleep around a pillow that smelled like Mike.

Mike stepped over Dustin, who was on the floor in a sleeping bag, his hat tilted over his eyes. Lucas had crashed on the couch, hand just grazing the top of Max's head where she slept under Nancy's old sleep-over blankets. Will was still at the cabin—another reason Hopper didn't argue with El when she decided to sleep somewhere else. Mike crouched at the entrance to the blanket fort. On one hand, he wanted nothing more than to pull Eleven into his lap, hold her tight against his chest and not let go until the sun came up. Maybe not even then. On the other hand, the last thing he wanted was to disturb the sleep she so desperately needed.

He compromised, unrolling his own sleeping bag just outside of the fort and doing his best not to make any noise. Once situated, Mike reached a hand out towards El's arm, brushing the very tips of his fingers against the tiny hairs there, barely ghosting over the back of her hand, her knuckles, her fingers. She'd gotten taller, slimmer, almost keeping pace with him and the rest of the boys. Her hands were bruised and scratched, but clean and soft after the shower she'd taken earlier; the one that washed away what was left of her

smudged makeup and melted the gel out of her hair, which now puffed in fat curls around her face. He slipped his fingers around her thumb, tucked them into her palm, wiggled himself deeper into his sleeping bag. Gently, she squeezed his fingers, and her eyelids fluttered open. “Hi Mike.” It was faint, but not weak. Nothing about her was weak. He smiled. She was back. She was here. She was real. She was really saying his name and holding his hand.

“Hey. Told you I’d be back.” They had all taken showers in turn, and then promptly passed out upon their return to the basement floor. El smiled back at him. She reached with her free hand for his cheek bones.

“Different.” He chuckled at her observation.

“My face?” She nodded with a smile. “A little, yeah. You too. Have you ever had your hair this long? Ever?”

“Don’t know. Don’t think so? Mama remembered it long, but different. But it’s like yours now!” She ran her fingers up to his forehead, along his hairline. “Soft.” She spread her fingers through his own tangled mop.

“I guess…yeah my hair usually gets soft after I wash it.” If anyone else ran their hands over his scalp like this, called him soft, whispered his name in the dark, he’d slap them. But it was El, and after 353 days of nothing, she could do whatever she wanted. He closed his eyes and pushed his head up against her hand. “mmm.” She giggled and scratched a little with her nails. A tingle shot down his spine. “Mm-mm” He nearly moaned and Eleven pulled her hand back like she’d been burned. He opened his eyes. “Why’d you stop?”

“You made a sound.”

“Oh. Sorry. Couldn’t help it.” His cheeks flushed. “It felt…really nice.”

“Oh.”

“Here. Feel.” He mimicked her actions, running his hands through her curls, and she responded in kind. “Your hair is really soft, too.”

“Clean.” She smiled and closed her eyes at the warmth of his hand. 353 days. That was plenty, she thought. He scratched a little closer to her temple, eliciting a nearly identical sound to the one he made, and her eyelids flew back open. “Oh!” she exclaimed. He smiled at her, swallowing another laugh of his own.

“See?” She nodded. “Hey, El?”

“Yes, Mike?” In the semi-dark of the basement, her eyes were almost all pupil.

He took her hands again. “Can I…kiss you?” She nodded ever so slightly, and a blush crept to the tips of her ears. He dove in with all the grace of a baby giraffe, and pressed their lips together in a moment that was over far too soon for both of them. They giggled together quietly, and Mike stared into her eyes.

“Again?” She asked. He nodded, and moved in close, much slower this time, pausing just before their lips touched. He felt her lips pull up at the corners in a nervous smile.

“You’re so pretty.”

She reached up for his hair again. “You’re so soft.” They kissed again, lingering a little this time.

They fell asleep with their foreheads pressed together.

353 days was over.
Day one of something different had finally arrived.